UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/6 (Prog. 15)
24 May 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session

PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

Programme 15: Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
Programme 15.	Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific	15.1 - 15.26	2
Subprogrammes:			
15.1	Regional economic cooperation: trade and investment	15.6 - 15.7	2
15.2	Regional economic cooperation: research and policy analysis	15.8 - 15.9	4
15.3	Regional economic cooperation: industry and technology	15.10	4
15.4	Environment and sustainable development	15.11	5
15.5	Poverty alleviation: social development	15.12	6
15.6	Poverty alleviation: rural and urban development	15.13 - 15.14	7
15.7	Poverty alleviation: population and development	15.15 - 15.16	8
15.8	Transport and communications	15.17 - 15.21	8
15.9	Statistics	15.22	9
15.10	Least developed, land-locked and island developing countries	15.23 - 15.26	10

96-13030 (E) 030696 040696

/...

15.1 The mandate of the programme derives from Economic and Social Council resolutions 37 (IV) and 414 (XIII), which established ESCAP. The mandate has been further elaborated in a number of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions adopted since, as well as in Commission resolutions, in particular, 47/3 of 10 April 1991 and 48/2 of 23 April 1992.

15.2 The Asia and Pacific region is a most economically dynamic region, yet not all the countries have been able to enjoy the benefits of the growing prosperity sweeping the region. While individual countries' priorities and policies may vary, there exists the common goal of sustainable economic growth coupled with a focus on poverty alleviation. Against this backdrop, the overall orientation of the programme, for which ESCAP is responsible, is to heighten the awareness of member countries to the changes taking place, to assist those which are developing rapidly to do so in a non-destructive and beneficial way, and, more important, to help the poorest countries improve opportunities for employment and economic growth, so that progress can be equitably shared by all. The programme will also identify key problem areas that each subregional grouping in the region is facing and develop and implement regional programmes in cooperation with United Nations organizations and specialized agencies, as well as regional intergovernmental organizations, to give tangible assistance to the developing countries in their economic and social development.

15.3 The Commission will continue to focus on three major themes, namely, (a) regional economic cooperation, with particular reference to the role of macroeconomic variables, trade and investment, industry and technology transfer; (b) environment and sustainable development that seeks to contain environmental degradation and emphasizes sound management and sustainable use of non-renewable resources; and (c) poverty alleviation through economic growth, creation of job opportunities and social development, with emphasis on human resource development and the provision of social services to the people of the region, in particular women, youth, the elderly and the disabled. The Commission will also pursue the implementation of programmes to improve intraregional and interregional infrastructure facilities and services to enhance international trade and tourism, improve the quality of life and strengthen the capacity of countries in the region to develop sustained statistical capacities for informed policy-making, planning and programme implementation. In that connection, the Commission will give priority to assisting the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries whose economic growth achievements remain well below the regional average and the Central Asian republics whose achievements, though improving, remain negative, with the goal of narrowing the disparity in economic growth between those countries and the emerging economies in the region. Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries (ECDC/TCDC) as well as the subregional groupings will be further promoted.

15.4 The Commission's secretariat will continue its lead role in organizing meetings of heads of subregional organizations and in attaining a unified and effective United Nations system-wide approach to regional development through the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific and its subsidiary subcommittees.

15.5 By the end of the period covered by the plan, it is expected that the programme will have achieved the following:

(a) Active and wider participation of the countries in the region in the development and implementation of regional programmes as mandated by the Commission;

(b) Accelerated follow-up to global conferences at the national level supported by the subregional and regional operational activities of ESCAP;

(c) Provided the essential regional link between the global and country levels of economic and social development programmes that would build up country-level capacity for development;

(d) Facilitated the sharing of experiences among countries at varying levels of development;

(e) Maximized the Commission's comparative advantage as a centre for policy research, analysis and information for the benefit of its member Governments.

Subprogramme 15.1 Regional economic cooperation: trade and investment

15.6 One of the characteristics of the region is the outward-oriented development strategies with increasing dependence on external trade adopted by the countries of the region. The subprogramme, for which the International Trade and Economic Cooperation Division is responsible, will seek to further enhance economic cooperation in trade and investment at different levels: among developing countries (ECDC/TCDC); between developed and developing countries; and among the developing countries with support from developed countries, that is, tripartite cooperation. Due attention will be accorded to the potential offered by growth zones and subregional trading arrangements in promoting intra- and inter-subregional cooperation. High priority will be accorded to the needs of the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries and the disadvantaged economies in transition, specifically those relating to the expansion of trade and share in investment flows to facilitate their integration into the mainstream of the region's overall development dynamism.

15.7 More specifically, the objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To identify emerging challenges and opportunities for the region in the light of regional and global developments for policy-oriented analysis and its dissemination to facilitate exchange of experiences through the provision of technical assistance and advisory services to the developing economies, with special emphasis on the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements and their implications and with particular attention to future multilateral trade negotiations;

(b) To enhance regional cooperation in trade efficiency and electronic commerce;

(c) To promote exports of developing countries with particular emphasis on least developed, land-locked and island developing countries and disadvantaged economies in transition;

(d) To expand networks of institutional support for the development of trade and investment flows;

(e) To strengthen regional information services for trade and investment.

Subprogramme 15.2 Regional economic cooperation: research and policy analysis

15.8 There has been a strong recent trend towards a convergence of macroeconomic policies and the deregulation, liberalization and structural reform of most economies in the region. Those trends have enabled them to forge closer links with the global economy, which offer them both opportunities and challenges for achieving sustained rapid growth, equitable distribution and poverty alleviation. The interface between domestic economic policies, on which the new openness tends to have exacerbated external influence and stable economic growth, poverty, income distribution and environmental issues, is often inadequately understood. Countries of the region have expressed strong desires to cooperate among themselves to share experiences in practices and policies to tackle common issues. In addition, the countries of the region have come to acknowledge a widening degree of complementarities among their economies with intent to exploit them to their mutual benefit through various forms of regional cooperation, including the streamlining of national economic policies and their harmonization wherever possible.

15.9 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Development Research and Policy Analysis Division is responsible, are:

(a) To increase understanding of the economic and social development situation in the region;

(b) To contribute to the awareness and understanding on the part of national policy makers of the constraints in the implementation and management of macroeconomic policies conducive to sustained economic growth, poverty alleviation and the integration of environmental concerns into macroeconomic decision- and policy-making processes;

(c) To advocate those policies which promote regional cooperation in economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific on the basis of shared experiences and the growing complementarities among economies of the region. Special attention will be paid to the problems of integrating the region's disadvantaged economies, such as those in transition, into the region's economic mainstream;

(d) To meet the extensive needs of the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries and economies in transition through the provision of technical assistance and advisory services on macroeconomic reforms and policy management.

Subprogramme 15.3 Regional economic cooperation: industry and technology

15.10 Even though the Asia and Pacific region has been extremely successful in achieving a consistently high rate of growth, there has been great disparity among member countries. The goal, therefore, is to reduce the extent of

disparity as much as possible through accelerated industrial and technological development. To that end, the objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Industry and Technology Division is responsible, are:

(a) To strengthen the capacity of countries in the region to formulate and review policies that will accelerate their industrial and technological development and to identify challenges and opportunities arising out of the regional and global changes such as the Uruguay Round for effective industrial and technological restructuring in order to provide a sound basis for enhanced manufacturing competitiveness of those countries;

(b) To strengthen national capabilities in areas such as capital flows, especially for small and medium-size enterprises; involvement of women in manufacturing; building up of industrial and technological infrastructure; and access to new and emerging technologies, such as information technology;

(c) To encourage the participation of the private sector in the development of human resources (industrial and technological skills creation and upgrading); domestic and foreign direct investment; and policy formulation and review; and to encourage participation of industry in research and development to ensure the commercialization of research results;

(d) To promote the introduction of science and technology in rural areas with a view to developing rural industrialization and generating employment and thereby contribute to a better quality of life;

(e) To strengthen national institutions in decisions and actions related to technology choice, transfer, adaptation, utilization and management;

(f) To promote the utilization and development of environmentally sound technologies in industry;

(g) To assist the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries and transitional economies in designing appropriate policy measures and technical assistance programmes for industrial and technological development in order to bring them into the mainstream of the regional economic development.

Subprogramme 15.4 Environment and sustainable development

15.11 The challenge for the region is to reverse the deteriorating environmental trends as identified in the 1995 State of the Environment in Asia and the Pacific. The goal is to strengthen national capacities in achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development, focusing on the regional strategies and action programmes that have emerged since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Development. To that end, the objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Environment and Natural Resources Management Division is responsible, are:

(a) To promote integration of environmental considerations into social and economic decision-making at the national, subregional and regional levels;

(b) To assist Governments in capacity-building for sustainable development policy analysis and legislation and in further strengthening national institutions dealing with the environment, and to promote increased roles of major groups and the private sector, as well as enhanced public awareness and participation;

(c) To strengthen the capacity of Governments in formulating and implementing policies for the sustainable development and management of energy through sound choices of energy options, energy demand management, energy conservation, energy efficiency and new and renewable energy technologies;

(d) To facilitate a regional dialogue to promote regionally coordinated national energy plans in the context of overall economic development plans, through periodic exchange of views and experience in the implementation of energy policies and plans on possible subregional energy/power networks and on common environmental protection initiatives;

(e) To strengthen the capacity of Governments in the formulation of policies and implementation of plans and programmes on assessment, integrated development and management and protection of water resources, and in implementation of innovative approaches for demand management and for efficient use of water;

(f) To strengthen national capabilities in the formulation of policies and strategies for the implementation of programmes for the development of mineral resources and investment promotion in the sector, and for the application of geologic aspects in land use and urban planning;

(g) To facilitate regional cooperation in environmental management of mineral resource development;

(h) To promote regional cooperation on space technology applications and strengthen national capacities in the applications of remote sensing, Geographical Information System and other spatial information technologies for natural resource management, environmental monitoring, disaster management and development planning;

(i) To assist Governments in their efforts in water-related and geologic natural disaster reduction through promotion of prevention and preparedness measures, including risk analysis, structural and non-structural measures, and hazard monitoring.

Subprogramme 15.5 Poverty alleviation: social development

15.12 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Social Development Division is responsible, are:

(a) To heighten region-wide awareness of critical social issues and human resource development challenges, with specific reference to poverty alleviation;

(b) To promote the formulation and implementation of effective social policies, plans and programmes aimed at alleviating poverty, enhancing the

quality of life of all social groups and pursuing vigorous development of the region's human resource endowment;

(c) To strengthen national capabilities towards attaining the goals and targets contained in the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region; the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002; and the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region;

(d) To promote cooperation among and between government agencies and non-governmental and private-sector organizations in planning and implementing social development and human resource development policies, plans and programmes;

(e) To promote inter-agency cooperation and coordinate joint action on social aspects of poverty alleviation in the ESCAP region.

Subprogramme 15.6 Poverty alleviation: rural and urban development

15.13 The subprogramme, for which the Rural and Urban Development Division is responsible, will focus on improving the quality of life in human settlements, creating conditions for sustainable agriculture and rural development, and promoting the status of women both as agents and beneficiaries of development.

15.14 The objectives are:

(a) To strengthen the technical, managerial and organizational capacities of local governments and non-governmental and community-based organizations to manage and develop urban areas and to reduce poverty in the region;

(b) To assist governmental and non-governmental actors in finding innovative solutions to issues of urban poverty and of quality of life, such as shelter, health, environment, participation, access to services and employment while enhancing urban productivity;

(c) To increase civic society partnerships in urban governance by facilitating the establishment of urban forums with broad participation and by promoting the adoption of participatory approaches at the local and community levels;

(d) To strengthen Governments and non-governmental organizations dealing with rural development issues by promoting people's participation strategies;

(e) To conduct analyses of national and regional rural poverty situations for providing policy recommendations and to plan and implement activities aimed at target groups, including off-farm employment and access of the rural poor to land, credit and other productive assets;

(f) To support activities to achieve food security at the rural household level and to deal with problems in the agricultural sector arising from the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations;

(g) To promote technically and economically proper use of agrochemicals aimed at achieving sustainable agricultural development and to increase agricultural production capacity and food supply through information dissemination and human resource development;

(h) To strengthen the capabilities of Governments to implement the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;

(i) To promote the empowerment of women through increased gender equality in the access to productive resources and social services;

(j) To promote policies and programmes to enable women to play an active role as both agents and beneficiaries of development.

Subprogramme 15.7 Poverty alleviation: population and development

15.15 The 1992 Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development and the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 have established a new agenda on population issues regionally and globally into the twenty-first century. These instruments provide the mandates for ESCAP in the areas of (a) reproductive health, including family planning; (b) population policies and development strategies; and (c) advocacy to increase awareness of population issues among policy makers and decision makers.

15.16 The objectives of the subprogramme, for which the Population Division is responsible, are:

(a) To promote understanding of the complex interrelationships among population and development, including concerns with poverty, the environment and women in development, among others;

(b) To strengthen government capacity to formulate appropriate integrated population and development policies and programmes as called for by the Bali Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994.

Subprogramme 15.8 Transport and communications

15.17 Although the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific has come to an end, the need to address in an effective manner the issue of inadequate infrastructure facilities and services continues, as demonstrated by the Commission's adoption of the New Delhi Action Plan on infrastructure 1997-2006 in its resolution 51/8. To that end, the first objective of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Transport, Communications and Tourism Division, is to improve the planning process in developing infrastructure facilities and services at all levels, and to improve the efficiency of their administration, management and operation in the countries of the region. The second objective is to promote private sector participation in national infrastructure development through financing, management, operations and risk-

sharing, with a view to accelerating the provision of infrastructure required to sustain the economic and social growth process.

15.18 The third objective of the subprogramme is to promote the development of interregional and intraregional transport linkages to enhance international trade and tourism, through the implementation of Commission resolutions 52/5 and 48/11, with emphasis on the integrated Asian land transport infrastructure development project comprising the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway projects, as well as land transport facilitation measures. The formulation of Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks will be completed and action plans to improve efficiency of transport along those networks, with particular reference to land-locked and transit countries, will be formulated. The secretariat, in close cooperation with other international organizations, will also promote freight forwarding and multimodal transport to facilitate integrated land-cum-sea transport.

15.19 In line with the recommendations of the Commission at its fifty-first and fifty-second sessions that tourism should be given a greater priority in the ESCAP programme, the fourth objective is to improve policies for planning tourism development, with a clear understanding of the economic impact of tourism; strengthen national capabilities in the development of human resources in the tourism sector and, in particular, tourism marketing; minimize the environmental impact of tourism; and promote tourism investment, facilitation of travel and regional and subregional cooperation in tourism development. The needs of Pacific island countries, least developed countries, economies in transition and countries in an early stage of tourism development will receive special attention.

15.20 The fifth objective is to increase safety and safe working practices in transport and communication operations and to reduce the adverse environmental impact of the provision of infrastructure facilities and services to acceptable levels. The secretariat will strengthen its assistance to member countries in promoting the safe transport of passengers and goods, in particular hazardous goods, while maintaining a clean environment, and in implementing environmental impact assessments in relation to infrastructure development and operation.

15.21 The sixth objective is to increase the participation of economically and socially disadvantaged groups and women, in the provision of and access to infrastructure facilities and services, with a view to making qualitative and quantitative improvements in their living standards. The secretariat will assist member countries in promoting more equitable spatial distribution of economic activities, providing easier access to social amenities, including education and health facilities, and generating employment opportunities.

Subprogramme 15.9 Statistics

15.22 The objectives of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Statistics Division, are:

(a) To strengthen the capacity of the countries of the region in achieving or making further progress towards sustained national statistical capabilities for the purposes of informed policy-making, planning, programme implementation

and monitoring of progress. In the implementation of the subprogramme, greater recognition will be given to the growing competencies of the countries themselves in contributing to capability-building activities;

(b) To widen the scope and improve the accessibility and international comparability of the statistical information compiled and disseminated by the secretariat, taking into account user demands. To that end the focus will be on greater use of electronic technology in the acquisition and provision of data and information, and on reducing the response burden of countries;

(c) To strengthen the role of the countries of the region in the development of international standards, the use of improved methodology for data collection, processing and analysis, and the greater utilization of statistics. In line with the recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission, the secretariat will initiate and coordinate at the regional level the development, revision, testing and implementation of selected international statistical standards and, where necessary, their adaptation to meet the conditions and needs of the countries of the region;

(d) To enhance the understanding of the role of information technology and promote the applications of that technology as well as information resource management in the region, especially in the public sector.

Subprogramme 15.10 Least developed, land-locked and island developing countries

15.23 Many least developed, land-locked and island developing countries improved their macroeconomic performance in the early 1990s, compared with the second half of the 1980s. Nevertheless, serious structural and institutional constraints continue to hamper their development. Among those constraints are low savings and investment, high dependence on a few primary commodities for exports, inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation, shortage of skills and trained manpower, slow technological progress, a low level of human resource development and inadequate access for the majority of the population to appropriate health care, nutrition, education, housing, sanitation and other social amenities. Generally low administrative capacity and other institutional constraints have limited their ability to implement much needed reforms. Moreover, the island developing countries suffer from special difficulties such as geographic isolation and fragmentation, shortage of land-based resources and diseconomies of scale resulting in high costs of infrastructure, investment and production, while the land-locked countries face transit and transport problems that impede their growth.

15.24 In view of the above, the first objective of the subprogramme, for which the Least Developed Countries Section and the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre are responsible, is to highlight trends and emerging problems and to draw policy makers' attention to priority concerns. Simultaneous efforts will be made to improve the statistical capability of these countries to identify, collect, process, analyse and utilize data needed for their economic and social development, thereby strengthening their information and statistical base.

15.25 The second objective is to improve the capacities of these countries to integrate more closely into the dynamic regional development as well as into the

international economy. To that end, particular attention will be given to support their efforts at economic reform and for more efficient resource mobilization and use, including through ECDC/TCDC opportunities available in the region; and to secure greater participation of these countries in the growing intraregional flows of investment, finance, trade and technology. Attention will also be paid to vital issues such as those related to flows of official development assistance, external debt and the implications of the Uruguay Round agreements for these countries, implementation of regional and global mandates towards the improvement of their social conditions, and the realization of key objectives as set in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. For the island developing countries, the objective is to build the capacity of Governments to analyse, devise policies and build machinery for the effective implementation of measures such as those identified at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States, held in Barbados in 1994. For land-locked countries, transit issues will receive urgent attention.

15.26 The third objective is to enhance human resource development in these countries, especially developing the skills of public officials, in particular in the areas of macroeconomic policy formulation, management of development projects and sectoral areas of priority interest to the countries concerned.